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CHRYSTAL GAZING NEW STRANGE FAD

BOSTON, April 4.—One of the most famous objects in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts of this city is a great crystal ball with oriental settings, the largest mirror of the subconscious world, it is said, on the planet. Acquired for the Ames collection from an East Indian source and loaned for an indefinite period to the Museum in Copley Square, it perpetually invites to the exercise of the now fashionable fad of crystal gazing. You look into it, or into any other of a large group of similar but smaller globes under certain favoring conditions and, if your tempering is right, you may see visions projected from out your subliminal life.

Seeing things in very popular just now. A play, for example, in which so well known a thespian as Miss Ethel Barrymore is starring this season presents a crystal gazing scene. This is a time, too, when along with the general revival of interest in all topics pertaining to psychical research, more people, probably than ever before in the history of the world are looking into crystals, glasses of water, polished stone or wood or other surfaces capable of reflecting light with the expectation that apparitions or hallucinations may float before their eyes.

"Spooks" seen in a glass seem from all accounts to be among the easiest to conjure up. Whatever the cause of these apparitions the fact remains that from very early times peculiarly constituted persons—about one individual in seven—have appeared to possess the power of producing hallucinations of a certain kind in themselves by gazing intently into a crystal. In recent years, and especially since the formation of societies for scientific study of psychical research in this country and abroad, interest in such phenomena has been very keen, and a considerable body of facts apparently well authenticated, has been collected. Prof. James H. Hyslop, president of the new American Society for Psychical Research, has long been studying the psychological considerations involved in this cult of crystal gazing, and in his book "Enigmas of Psychical Research," as well as in other popular expositions of metaphysical subjects, has given in detail the records of strange sights from the unseen realm. He cautiously claims nothing from which an argument can be drawn as to such communications from the eternal depths as Sir Oliver Lodge asserts he has had. He finds, however, a great mass of data that fascinate the student of the little understood activities of the subliminal mind.

The marvels of crystal gazing come right down to homely experience. If, for instance, you looked into a glass ball and there came before your eyes a sharp, distinct picture of your old minister whom you had not seen for fifteen years and then just as you exclaimed "Why, Mr. X," the face vanished and there appeared a slight picture of a cemetery, would you not think there was occasion for apprehension? Later the woman who saw this sight in the glass brightly is reported to have gone to the city to which the clergyman had moved, found the man himself dying and recognized the very cemetery which she had seen while looking into the crystal.

This notion of seeing the unseeable at times when the gaze is fixed upon a reflecting surface whose high lights are eliminated as far as possible is nothing new in history. As Prof. Hyslop discloses in his book on the metaphysical enigmas, this form of divination was known among the Greeks, who possessed polished and enchanted crystals in which future events were signified. He has also found traces of the practices of crystal gazing in Assyria, Greece, Rome, China, Japan, India and possibly in some of the South Sea Islands. The use of a mirror or crystal ball has been noted among the Apaches of the western plains; they employ a crystal to discover stolen property. Other tribes of Indians make their patients gaze into water in which they see pictures of the food and medicine good for them. In Polynesia a hole is dug in the ground and as it fills with water the priest peers in to discover the authors of thefts. In India castor oil is held in the hand of a child and in the mirror thus formed float weird pictures of spirits and demons.

Most of the stories of wonders accomplished by means of crystal gazing have come down on the basis of such testimony that they are regarded by the scientists as interesting but unreliable. Nor are the modern manifestations held to belong necessarily to the realm of the queer. The point of view of modern psychical

research is that strange things actually do come before the mind at times, as a result of a concentrated gazing. There is no need of calling them supernatural; they are simply supernormal.

Oftentimes an impression made by some circumstance of years before and entirely erased from conscious memory reappears. An advertisement in a newspaper, seen but not really noticed months before, will drift into consciousness. Prof. Hyslop cites the case of a woman living in Brooklyn who on looking into the crystal frequently had a vision of a bright blue sky, a garden with a wall fence and a peculiar chain pump in the garden. Later she went to her old home which she had not known since she was two or three years old and there, sure enough, were the chain pump, the wall fence and the bright blue sky.

One of the internationally famous crystal seers is Mrs. Verrall, for sometime a lecturer at Newnham College, Cambridge, England, and known to the classical world as the translator of Pausanias. Mrs. Verrall has had many other entertaining physical experiences, some of which enter into the long-expected revelations from Sir Oliver Lodge as to communications from the late F. W. H. Myers.



THE LARGEST OF CRYSTALS

As regards crystal gazing Mrs. Verrall has found a cut crystal, globular crystal, a glass paper weight or a glass full of water to be equally effective. She says she is most likely to see things when the light is dim. She has occasionally seen pictures in fairly bright light, but never in absolute darkness. The practice is useful in Mrs. Verrall's case because she finds it a convenient way of recalling things she has forgotten. The picture once produced has a reality which she says she has never been able to obtain when looking into the fire or trying to call up an imaginary scene with eyes closed. Sometimes she has practised automatic writing while looking into the crystal. The Countess of Radnor and Miss Goodrich-Freer are other English women who have been susceptible of the apparitions of the crystal.

Without prejudice as to the origin of these visions or hallucinations Prof. Hyslop and other writers of the psychical research literature, of which a new book by the secretary and founder of the Society for Psychical Research is shortly to be issued by the Small, Maynard publishing house, regard them evidently as pertaining particularly to acute sensibility of temperament. "The limits of knowledge," he says, "are not ex-

actly where Locke placed them, namely normal sensation and perception. Apparently the mind is sensitive to much else, or we cannot define the limits of sense perception. However this may be, crystal visions and similar phenomena bring us to the forced admission that we have not yet made the mysteries of mind as clear as preceding generations supposed."

The preservation, at all events of such crystals as those at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is an interesting indication of the entwining of material and immaterial in the history of art. Like so many of the relics of past civilizations they represent with their beautiful settings, a remarkable decorative achievement, while when one considers their use, they call attention to the constant striving of the human mind to understand the Great Unknown.

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